

PRESENTS

VICTORIA FREDE-MONTEMAYOR, Associate Professor at the Department of History, UC Berkeley, Senior Thyssen Fellow at IAS CEU

*The Sentimental Cult of Friendship in 18th Century
Russia: From Poems to Letters*

Wednesday, 19 October, 11:00 a.m.

Nádor 15, Room 103



The sentimental letter, also known as the familiar letter, was a genre unique to the late eighteenth century. As a practice of reading and writing, its purpose was introspection. By setting their thoughts to paper, individuals scrutinized and trained their moral dispositions, soliciting sympathy and reciprocation from their recipients. In this paper, I will argue that the practice of sentimental letter-writing was understood as a civic exercise in Russia, part of an educational program to reform the service nobility, cultivating in it a spirit of voluntary dedication to the interests of the throne, state, and society. The point will be demonstrated with reference to the correspondence of Elizaveta Kheraskova, wife of Mikhail Kheraskov, a leading poet and playwright of the late eighteenth century and curator of Moscow University. In particular, it will trace the source of Kheraskova's letter-writing practices of the

1780s to the poetic Epistle, a genre that Kheraskov had helped introduce to Russia in the late 1750s.

Victoria Frede is an intellectual historian of Imperial Russia from the mid-eighteenth century to mid-nineteenth century. Her first book, published in 2011, was *Doubt, Atheism, and the Nineteenth-Century Russian Intelligentsia* (The University of Wisconsin Press). Her current book project is titled *Elective Affinities: Friendship in Russia, 1750-1830*. Frede is associate professor at the Department of History, UC Berkeley.